

Fax Transmittal

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BYLINE: U.S. REP. SHELIA JACKSON LEE, STATE SEN. RODNEY ELLIS, STATE
REP. GARNET COLEMAN, GLEN BOUDREAUX, JEFFREY BURK, DAN
BARTLEY, LESLIE CHAURRO

BODY:

Civil rights actions now

We have preliminarily reviewed the draft report of the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights Issues Committee regarding Texas Southern University and Prairie View A&M University and are cautiously optimistic about the recommended course the committee has charted. We appreciate the hard work of the committee on this challenging issue.

Given the history of "big plans and broken promises" when it comes to issues of discrimination, however, we are skeptical about getting any results.

The plan - if it is implemented - represents a modest start toward ensuring Texas Southern and Prairie View A&M achieve a level of quality that will enhance educational opportunities and improve the lives of many Texans.

It is a modest downpayment, however, for solving such a major, historical problem. This is the fourth plan drafted in the past 20 years to address vestiges of discrimination in Texas higher education, yet little progress has been made to date.

In fact, it has been nearly three decades since the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights first found that discrimination continued to haunt Texas' colleges and universities. We have not seen much progress over the years, so it is hard to get too excited about yet another plan.

In our view, several questions remain unanswered. Because the OCR played such a small role in the actual drafting of this report, do its Issues Committee's recommendations go far enough to ensure that Texas finally meets the minimum requirements mandated by Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act?

Have federal officials given Texas assurance that this plan takes the necessary steps to eliminate vestiges of discrimination in higher education and to ensure that African-Americans and other persons of color have adequate opportunity to receive a college education?

How soon will an official report from this committee be released and has Texas actually given any assurance that it will enact these recommendations and provide this minimal level of funding?

Because of the record, we believe prudence demands our skepticism.

Overall, the report represents a first step toward ensuring TSU and Prairie View are provided the resources needed to overcome past discrimination in order to compete in the 21st century.

We look forward to working with the OCR Issues Committee, education leaders across Texas and the Legislature to take the next step and implement these policies. But this should only be considered the "next phase," not the end of efforts to eliminate vestiges of discrimination in Texas higher education.

We can no longer accept broken promises on this issue.

U.S. Rep. Shelia Jackson Lee, state Sen. Rodney Ellis, and state Rep. Garnet Coleman,
Houston

GRAPHIC: Drawing

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: May 5, 2000

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DRAFT #45
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
George W. Bush

DRAFT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 May xx, 2000

Contact: Michael Jones
 512/463-1826

GOVERNOR BUSH BACKS PLAN TO BOOST STATE'S BLACK COLLEGES

AUSTIN - Governor George W. Bush today announced that the State of Texas and the U.S. Department of Education have agreed to collaborate on the development of a plan to improve the quality of programs and facilities and to improve retention and graduation of students at Texas Southern University and Prairie View A&M University, the state's two historically black public universities.

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"I want all Texans to have an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of our state's higher education system," said Governor Bush. "Strengthening Prairie View and Texas Southern, along with the state's other public universities, is important in offering a quality education to all of our people," he added.

Under the agreement, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will develop a comprehensive plan for improving the two state-supported schools. The plan will include concrete steps to:

- Enhance the missions of the state's historically black universities to ensure they do not promote racial identifiability;
- Strengthen existing academic programs and create new high value, high demand academic programs. Programs being reviewed at Prairie View include engineering, architecture and construction, juvenile justice and nursing. Texas Southern programs being reviewed include biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences, urban planning, computer engineering and environmental law and policy;
- Provide both institutions with the facilities and other resources needed to support existing and new programs;
- Ensure facilities and campus environments are equal to state-funded facilities at comparable state higher education institutions;
- Assist incoming students in making the transition to higher education and improve retention and graduation rates. *in all schools*

not

The Coordinating Board released a recommended plan for strengthening the two universities on May 1. The Coordinating Board and the U.S. Department of Education will ~~amend the plan~~, if needed, by September 2000. A final plan will be approved in late October. Governor Bush is committed to advocating the plan's implementation and the allocation of resources for the plan by the Texas Legislature.

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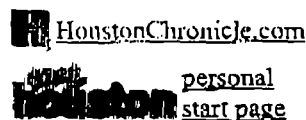
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Agreement to address college bias

Texas plans to spend extra on black schools

By RON NISSIMOV
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Gov. George W. Bush and the federal government agreed Thursday to work together to address concerns that Texas may be discriminating against its two historically black colleges.

Officials said the formal agreement is a necessary step before Texas can implement a plan to address the federal concerns, and does not necessarily mean that the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights believes Texas is headed in the right direction.

A state committee in late April proposed spending an extra \$380 million in the next 20 years on Texas Southern University and Prairie View A&M University to address the federal concerns.

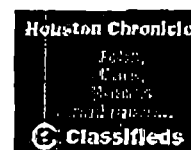
The Coordinating Board will vote on the recommendations in October. If they are approved by the board, Bush and the Legislature that convenes next year would also have to approve the funding.

Bush spokesman Michael Jones said Thursday's agreement is "just the next step in a long process." He said the governor "is strongly backing the whole concept and process for making these two very important universities even stronger."

Jones said he expects the Office of Civil Rights to comment on the specific recommendations by September, but officials at the federal office could not confirm Thursday if they plan to do that.

The agreement, signed by Bush and Department of Education officials, said Texas will try to achieve five

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general goals.

These are: enhancing Texas' black colleges to ensure they promote "racial identifiability" while at the same time not promote segregation; implement unique and desirable academic programs at the black colleges; provide the black colleges with necessary facilities; make the facilities and campuses of the black colleges as attractive as historically white colleges; and increase the number of minority students graduating from traditionally white colleges.

The federal government in the late 1970s and early 1980s asked 19 states with traditionally black colleges to come up with plans to remedy past discrimination. Texas agreed to develop a plan in 1983, but the federal government and the state had not settled the case before the U.S. Supreme Court in the early 1990s made a ruling against Mississippi in a similar matter.

The findings in that case, U.S. vs. Fordice, led the Office for Civil Rights to conclude last year that Texas may be promoting segregation because, among other things, white students did not have enough incentive to attend the state's two historically black colleges.

"We are grateful for the existence of federal civil rights laws, such as the Supreme Court case of U.S. vs. Fordice and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that instigated the final agreement ... between Texas and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights," said U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Houston, who has worked to try to resolve the issue.

"It's important to note the U.S. Supreme Court said in the Fordice case that having race-neutral policies alone is not sufficient to determine whether a state has discharged its obligation," Lee said. "We will have to obtain adequate funding in order to make sure the commitment comes into fruition."

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the agency in charge of making policy guidelines for state colleges, organized a Committee on OCR Issues to develop recommendations addressing the concerns. Those recommendations, which were issued in late April, proposed expenditures of \$196 million -- including \$30 million in private funds -- would go to TSU in Houston. All the \$184 million proposed for Prairie View A&M would be public money.

Most of the money would be for construction of new buildings and improving existing facilities. For TSU, \$121 million would be for such expenses and \$140 million for Prairie View.

The Office for Civil Rights said it found "unnecessary duplication" of courses at TSU and nearby University of Houston, as well as Prairie View and Texas A&M University.

In a controversial stance, the OCR said the state should develop innovative and "highly desirable" academic programs at TSU and Prairie View that would not be available at UH and Texas A&M, respectively.

For TSU, the state committee recommended improving or creating programs in several areas, including law, business, pharmacy, education training, biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences, urban planning and environmental policy, environmental law and justice, computer science, and computer engineering technology.

For Prairie View, the academic improvements recommended are in the areas of engineering, architecture and construction, juvenile justice, nursing and educator training.

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